

Implementation Team Meeting Notes

April 6, 2006

1. Greetings and Introductions.

The April 6 IT meeting was chaired by John Palensky and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should contact Kathy Ceballos at 503-230-5420.

2. Updates.

A. In-Season Management (TMT). Cathy Hlebechuk said Libby is currently at elevation 2403.6, releasing 6 Kcfs and drafting slightly. The project is being operated for flood control. As of midnight April 5th, the elevation at Hungry Horse was 3526 feet; the project is releasing about 8.5 Kcfs, and may go to full powerhouse discharge of 10.5 Kcfs on April 7th. Hungry Horse may need to be pre-drafted because of an upcoming transmission constraint in June, Hlebechuk said; they're going to have a line outage which will reduce transmission capacity to 820 MW between Libby and Hungry Horse. The concern is that we might have to fill and spill if we don't reduce Hungry Horse Reservoir elevation now.

Grand Coulee was at 1521.2 feet last night, said Hlebechuk; there is a Dworshak/Grand Coulee flood control shift this year, although it is not a full shift. Idaho Power requested a Brownlee/Grand Coulee flood control shift, which we were obliged to refuse, because it would have caused us to exceed Grand Coulee's daily draft limit; as a result, Brownlee increased discharge from 35 Kcfs to 60 Kcfs last night, Hlebechuk said. Dworshak was at 1531.9 feet last night, and is releasing full powerhouse capacity. At Lower Granite, the current inflow is about 120 Kcfs, up from 88 Kcfs yesterday – the low-level snow in Idaho is melting off, Hlebechuk explained.

We have also been spilling involuntarily at the four Lower Columbia projects, Hlebechuk continued – at John Day yesterday, the average forced spill was 17 Kcfs; at The Dalles, 15 Kcfs; at Bonneville, 17 Kcfs. Voluntary fish spill began on April 3 at the Lower Snake projects. Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental were at MOP on April 4; Little

Goose and Lower Granite reached MOP today. The dredging did not get done this year, so we are operating to MOP +1 foot at the Lower Snake projects. John Day will be at MOP on April 10.

There's a lot going on at the Lower Columbia projects, Hlebechuk said; there was a T1 transmission system failure at John Day Dam on March 2, which put Units 1-4, the preferred fish units, out of service until September. The wire rope replacement at The Dalles is ahead of schedule; the last gates, 7-9, will be done by early May, and no fish spill restrictions are anticipated. At Bonneville, the B2 corner collector was supposed to be operational by April 10; however, there has been a delay, because of high flows during February, to allow us to dry-test the new full-flow PIT-tag detection antenna. At yesterday's TMT meeting, we discussed the fact that we'll probably need to delay the start of corner collector operations for four days. In response to a question, Hlebechuk said yesterday's flow at Bonneville was 221 Kcfs; that will increase significantly as the Snake River flow makes its way downstream.

At yesterday's TMT meeting, we also discussed the most recent runoff volume forecast information, said Hlebechuk; pretty much everything is in the 95-105 percent of normal range. The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the forecasts, offering a variety of clarifying questions and comments.

Hlebechuk noted that the TMT also received a briefing from Robert Stansell on 2006 marine mammal predation; the bottom line is that the observed take of salmon exceeds the number of salmon that have passed Bonneville to date, and the sea lions have taken at least 233 sturgeon so far this season, many of spawning size. Tony Nigro said Oregon and Washington are working with the tribes and NMFS to see what options may be available under sections 109 and 120 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, in terms of harassing and, potentially, removing problem animals. Oregon and Washington also began active hazing efforts earlier this week, in an effort to reduce marine mammal predation on salmon and sturgeon stocks. It was noted that, by the time removal permits were obtained for the problem sea lions at Ballard Locks in Seattle, the steelhead run there had already been driven to extinction.

The group also discussed SOR 2006-3, submitted at the April 5th TMT meeting. The SOR requested a change in the court-ordered spill implementation plan at John Day Dam, from zero daytime spill and 60 percent spill at night to 30 percent spill around the clock to assist with adult passage at the south shore fish ladder. Eric Braun said he had discussed the SOR with the Corps' biological and legal staff; they agreed that regional consensus is needed before the Corps can take such a request to Judge Redden. Braun suggested that the Regional Forum, particularly the TMT, might be the most appropriate venue to continue those discussions. Obviously some additional coordination will be needed in order for this change to sail smoothly through the court process, said Paul Wagner; however, there is a time constraint. There was some discussion of observing the adult fish passage effects of the court-ordered spill

operation first to see whether any detrimental passage effects the salmon managers are trying to avoid, such as an eddy in front of the south ladder, do in fact occur, he added.

B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). No report.

C. Water Quality Team (WQT). No report.

D. System Configuration Team (SCT). No report.

E. FCRPS Litigation. Mark Eames (NOAA-GCNW) said recent/upcoming items in the FCRPS litigation include the fact that the Department of Justice filed its second quarterly status report/remand update on Monday; that is now available for all of the litigation parties to comment on. Comments are due to Judge Redden by April 11. The DOJ also filed a 2006 spill implementation plan on April 3, as required by Judge Redden.

A status conference is scheduled before Judge Redden on April 21, at which time he will entertain discussion on the status report and the spill plan, Eames said. One issue that has been percolating for some time is the idea of extending the time period for the remand; the new BiOp is due in October 2006, and the general feeling is that that is not going to be enough time. The issue of how long to extend the remand is also likely to be a topic of discussion at the April 21 status conference. The next quarterly status report is due July 3.

Moving on to the activity in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, said Eames, the U.S. Government and the State of Idaho have appealed the injunction. The Court of Appeals has agreed to hear arguments on an accelerated schedule; opening briefs will be filed by April 14 by the U.S. Government and Idaho. The opposing parties will file their briefs by the end of this month, and oral arguments will be heard in San Francisco on May 25. The NWF parties will also be providing arguments before that panel on May 25.

Moving to another case, Eames said the Columbia/Snake River Irrigators' Association has also appealed Judge Redden's dismissal of their case; the Court of Appeals has scheduled oral arguments in that case on the same day, May 25, in San Francisco.

Finally, in the litigation consultation on the Bureau's Upper Snake projects, challenging the 2005 NMFS BiOp for the operation of the Upper Snake projects, the last step is the DOJ & ID briefs are due at the end of next week. Oral arguments are then scheduled before Judge Redden on April 26. That's pretty much what's going on in the world of litigation, Eames said. In response to a question, Eames explained that the litigants in this case are arguing that the Bureau's Upper Snake projects should have been included in the 2004 FCRPS BiOp, rather than in a separate BiOp; it is possible

that, if their argument is upheld, that could significantly expand the scope of the ongoing FCRPS litigation.

What are the prospects for getting an extension on the 2004 FCRPS BiOp? Jim Ruff asked. I think they're very good; the real question is how long it will be, Eames replied. Judge Redden has already denied a motion to extend the deadline for five months. However, it isn't really a question of whether there will be an extension – it's just how long it will be.

Obviously there is a court-ordered operation in place for 2006, said Eames; that operation cannot be changed unless Judge Redden orders it. Any changes, in other words, will need to be thoroughly vetted with all of the parties in the NWF v. NMFS litigation. If you can get concurrence, at the very least, Judge Redden will need to be notified that the Corps is going to change the operation. Ideally, we would get an affirmative response from the judge, but if all parties are in agreement that the change is warranted, I wouldn't expect Judge Redden to refuse such a request, Eames said.

3. RM&E Issues.

A. Update on the Council's Mainstem/Systemwide Review Process and Schedule for 2007-2009 Funding. Tom Iverson said the Council's project review process is now underway; a large group of the projects are in the mainstem/systemwide province. I'm working with Council staff to facilitate the proposal reviews, he explained; we've put together a review team that includes representatives from a broad spectrum of regional entities. We want to ensure that we coordinate closely with the BiOp remand effort and the Corps AFEP process, he said; we don't want to see a disconnect with either of those processes, so we're trying to keep the lines of communication open.

An initial package of proposals was sent to the review team last week, Iverson said; on Friday, the IT will see the final version of the process description. It will include priorities, monitoring and evaluation, critical uncertainties and selection criteria. We will be reviewing proposals on April 13, 14 and 17; that process should include a list of prioritized projects, as well as key issues that still need to be addressed. We will then produce a summary for the Council, Iverson said, including high, medium, low and do not fund priority recommendations. The Council will then start piecing their recommendations together in May; the provincial recommendations are due in June. Iverson added that only 20-30 percent of the proposals under review will come in for significant debate; most of the others are ongoing projects of proven value to the region. The plan is to wrap up this province by September, so that the Council can make a three-year recommendation at the start of the fiscal year in October.

In general, we're trying to keep the project review process as transparent as possible, Iverson said. Another related process is ongoing under the remand collaboration effort, Palensky noted; there is an RM&E work group that has been

meeting, which will eventually be producing a series of recommendations. The hope is that their work will be wrapped up in time to inform the Council process, but we'll see, he said.

In response to a question, Iverson said he expects that the list of high priority and core projects will exceed the available budget; this will make it extremely problematic to fund any new projects. Currently, the budget is \$32 million for mainstem projects, plus \$13 million for "multi-province" projects such as NOAA's Manchester captive broodstock program and the Council's basinwide water acquisition program. The bottom line is that it is likely to be a fairly brutal process this year, Iverson said; there is \$85 million in proposed projects competing for the available \$45 million in funding. Ruff observed that the Council process also needs to be coordinated with the Corps' AFEP process; he asked that the Corps send a representative to the Council's mainstem/systemwide project review process if at all possible.

B. Update on the Fall Chinook Transport Study. The contractors have begun tagging fish for the summer study, said Braun; it looks as though there will be enough fish to allow for a variety of valid analyses of Snake River fall Chinook transport in 2006. The planning group for this study is meeting later today, and the technical group will be meeting tomorrow, he said; one of the topics of discussion will be whether and how to fold this study into the remand process, as some of the US v. Oregon parties have requested.

Is the final study design available? Jim Litchfield asked. I don't know – there has been a lot of discussion, Braun replied. I believe it's fair to say that there still isn't a strong consensus on the final study design, Kim Fodrea said; it was agreed to go forward with tagging the fish, and the meetings later today and tomorrow are going to include an effort to reach consensus on what the study design should be. Nigro noted that the US v. Oregon parties have agreed to the tagging of production fish for 2006 only; any future tagging of production fish will be predicated on regional consensus on a long term study plan.

Who is participating in the planning and technical committees, and who is taking the lead on those committees? Dave Statler asked. I know Paul Ocker is the lead person for the Corps, Braun replied. The planning group was initially established by the US v. Oregon parties and the action agencies, said Nigro. The participants in the planning group then designated representatives for the technical work group, he explained. There is no formal chair, although Paul Ocker is the main point of contact for both groups. All four of the tribes in US v. Oregon have been participating in both the planning and technical committees, Nigro added, particularly the Nez Perce Tribe.

C. Update on Progress on Fish Passage Model Development. Rich Zabel provided an overview of the ISAB review of the new COMPASS model. The review concluded: "The new COMPASS model will be heavily used by many people in the Columbia River Basin and should prove to be a welcome addition to the analytical tools

available to both scientists and managers alike. Our critique here is voluminous, but is explicitly intended to provide a series of strong but constructive suggestions to facilitate the continuing development of what we feel will be a valuable new modeling tool for the region. The model is still under active development, particularly the components for stochasticity and the Bonneville-to-ocean segment, and will profit from another review when it is complete.”

Zabel touched on other elements of the ISAB’s review of the COMPASS model, including:

- Model complexity (conclusion: COMPASS provides a reasonable level of complexity, with sufficient detail to capture what is happening without being overly demanding of knowledge that does not exist. SIMPAS, in contrast, was too simplistic, while CRiSP was too complex)
- Statistical considerations (reservoir survival relationship potentially “overfits” the data; data weighting scheme not justified; should use logistic transform and include intercept term; travel time distribution misses mode and therefore “fattens” the tail)
- Model development (continue development of graphical user I/O interface; incorporate stochasticity in dam passage parameters; streamline data files, stochasticity in dam parameters, post-Bonneville delayed mortality module, will modify the model based on the ISAB’s review).

Zabel asked anyone with questions or comments to contact him at rich.zabel@noaa.gov. In response to a question from Ruff, Zabel said that, due to limits on the available data, the COMPASS model development group is debating whether or not it is even worthwhile to try to develop a passage model for fall Chinook. Obviously that’s the key question for the region, Jim Litchfield observed – I’m aware of the complexities associated with trying to estimate fall Chinook survival, but any insight you can provide would be welcome. We can certainly look at alternative hypotheses, but so far, we haven’t really looked at those data, Zabel said. In response to another question, Zabel said the two species the COMPASS model has looked at so far are Snake River spring Chinook and steelhead; the next species for which good data is available is Upper Columbia spring Chinook.

D. Update on Proposal for System Flood Control Study Review Team. At the last IT meeting, a proposal was put forward to create a system flood control study review team, said Silverberg; at that meeting, it was agreed that the IT participants would confer with others in their agency about who might participate in such a group, and how we should most efficiently proceed. Since that meeting, said Silverberg, I have heard from the states and others that this is a key policy issue, but they’re not sure how to proceed. The Corps has now received comments on the system flood study and is in the process of evaluating them, she said. Ruff noted that the Council has requested the opportunity to submit its comments following the April Council meeting.

Braun said the he doesn't know how many comments have been officially submitted to date; the Corps is still trying to assess the strength of regional support for moving forward with the system flood control study. We'll put an update on this topic on the May IT agenda, said Silverberg.

4. Planning/Decisionmaking Issues.

A. 2006 Water Management Plan Spring/Summer Update. Hlebechuk said the draft 2006 spring/summer update to the Water Management Plan has now been posted to the TMT website; she asked that any comments be submitted to her within the next two weeks.

B. 2006 Court-Ordered Spill Implementation Plan. Braun reiterated that the 2006 spill implementation report was filed on Monday, April 3; the action agencies will be updating the court on the implementation of the spill program every 30 days during the spill season. Again, he said, the 2006 fish passage implementation plan, dated March 31, is available via the www.salmonrecovery.gov website. Braun provided a brief overview of this plan; please refer to the full text of the document for detailed spill plans at each of the FCRPS projects.

5. Regional Forum Process Issues.

A. Long-Term Strategic Planning. Palensky drew the group's attention to the latest iteration of the IT's long-term strategic planning issues list; it was agreed that the IT will receive an update on the fall Chinook study plan at the group's May meeting. CRFM review criteria for FY'07 CRFM priorities will also be addressed at the May IT meeting. We'll probably have an update on water quality at the May meeting, as well as the status of the system flood control study, he added. A litigation update will be provided if warranted. The next update on sea lion predation at Bonneville will likely be provided at the July IT meeting. An update on the Council's mainstem/systemwide project prioritization process will also be provided at the May meeting.

6. Next IT Meeting Date.

The next Implementation Team meeting was set for Thursday, May 4. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.